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ABSTRACT

To provide a deeper look into the American political system that so intrigued the visiting French statesman Alexis de Tocqueville in 1831 and 1832, this monograph focuses on the role of the press in American politics in the the age of Jackson, the 1820s and early 1830s--a period of dramatic and substantive political party growth. In particular, the monograph examines the press within the context of early nineteenth century American politics, focusing on a large number of newspapers and editors nationwide. Given particular attention are the press in the District of Columbia and in the states of Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. These states were chosen for study because of their political importance and to provide a geographic overview of the nation. The contextual and aggregate analysis shows that press and party were inextricably bound in the age of Andrew Jackson. The press did, in fact, provide a forum for public opinion, as de Tocqueville noted, but its role in American political society was far more extensive. In particular, newspaper editors formed the nucleus of political organization in the 1820s and 1830s, and thus were central to the dramatic growth in partisan activity that characterized the age of Jackson. (HTH)

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GERALD J. BALDASTY

The Press and Politics In the Age of Jackson

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GERALD J. BALDASTY

The Press and Politics In the Age of Jackson

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WHEN ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE visited the United States in 1831 and 1832, he marveled at the "immense" influence of the press in American political life. Tocqueville believed that newspapers were the major forum for politics and for the formation of public opinion in the nation. The press, he wrote, "causes political life to circulate through all the parts of that vast territory," forcing leaders to face the popular will, rallying "the interests of the community round certain principles," and serving as a vital communication link for a dispersed population.[1]

To provide a deeper look into the political system that so intrigued Tocqueville, this monograph focuses on the role of the press in American politics in the 1820s and early 1830s, which was a period of dramatic and substantive party growth. In particular, this research examines the press within the context of early 19th-century American politics, focusing on a large number of newspapers and editors nationwide. Given particular attention are the press in the District of Columbia and in the states of Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, as well as a few leading editors in other states, such as New Hampshire, Ohio, Kentucky and Virginia. These states were chosen because of their political importance and to provide a geographic overview of the nation.

Few if any scholars have attempted both a contextual and an aggregate view of the press in the early 19th century. Rather, some scholars have judged the past by present-day ideals, such as objectivity, and thus condemned the partisan journalism of the age of Jackson as a dark age of American journalism.[2] Such polemics prevent an understanding of the operation and significance of the press in the young republic. Other scholars have produced serious contextual studies, but have focused

primarily on individual newspapers and editors rather than providing a broad overview of Jacksonian era press.[3] The aggregate analysis here, examining scores of editors nationally, builds upon those pioneering biographical works which demonstrated some of the parameters of partisan debate in the press in the age of Jackson.

Overall, a contextual and aggregate analysis shows that press and party were inextricably bound in the age of Jackson. The press did, in fact, provide a forum for public opinion, as Tocqueville noted, but its role in American political society was far more extensive. In particular, editors formed the nucleus of political organization in the 1820s and 1830s, and thus were central to the dramatic growth in partisan activity that characterized the age of Jackson.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Antiparty Sentiment in the Early Republic

The growth of Jacksonian political parties and partisan newspapers is notable because it departed so radically from the founders' view that parties were inherently evil. Colonial America had operated on a deferential system of politics, and the first major efforts at formal organization came only when the Revolutionary generation sought to correct injustices wrought by England. Indeed, the Revolutionary generation generally viewed parties in the same light it viewed revolution: not as a permanent fixture or process, but as one necessitated at a particular — and brief — time to restore purity to government. Antipartyism ran deep in Revolutionary thought, based on the belief that politics had debased England.[4]

The new nation thus inherited this philosophical antipartyism. The Constitution of 1787 was silent about the role of political parties, and Washington, as first president, believed government served best when it avoided partisanship. Despite Washington's desires, a government of consensus was not possible, particularly with the differences between Hamiltonian nationalists and Jeffersonian Republicans. These disputes over both domestic and foreign policy led to jockeying in both camps for public support.

Both Federalists and Republicans used the press in their attempt to marshal public opinion to their policies and ideals. Jefferson believed that newspapers were the key to assuring that true Republicans knew the truth about the Federalist administration and Republican philosophy.[5] The ensuing newspaper debates of the 1790s served to emphasize the political differences that existed and to reify and formalize the two-party division in the 1790s.

Once in power after 1800, the Jeffersonians adopted Washington's wishes for government via unanimity. "We are all republicans, we are all

federalists," Jefferson vowed in his first inaugural address, and he and his two successors spent a quarter century trying to abolish parties in the nation. And on a national level they succeeded, at least for a time.[6]

A lack of competition over the presidency obviated the need for nationally competitive parties in the first quarter of the 19th century. The Virginia Dynasty of Jefferson, Madison and Monroe held the presidency from 1801 to 1825; furthermore, the succession seemed set: both Madison and Monroe had served as secretary of state for their predecessors. (And so, when Henry Clay wanted the inside track to the presidency in 1825, he unwisely sought the same position.) The formal mechanism for this oligarchy was the nomination by the congressional caucus, which ratified the succession until 1824. In 1820 Monroe ran unopposed for a second term, and his desire to see the end of political divisions in the land seemed at last to be reality.[7]

The Election of 1824: The End of Unanimity

The years surrounding the 1824 election demonstrate well that Monroe's hope for government by consensus was at best ephemeral. Indeed, the 1824 presidential election served as a catalyst for the formation of new national political parties which were heavily dependent on the press for reaching the public, and upon editors for organizational activity. The growth of national political competition stemmed from several factors. The Virginia Dynasty came to an end with Monroe and Americans took a renewed interest in both the presidency and the federal government. A new generation of Americans, in some ways more pragmatic than their elders, was entering politics. Young and ambitious men like Martin Van Buren and Thomas Ritchie believed that only political organization would revive pure Jeffersonian Republicanism. And so these enterprising men built state party machines, at first dedicated to building a home base in politics, but increasingly in the middle 1820s they turned to national politics as well. Would-be presidential candidates, such as John C. Calhoun and Andrew Jackson, sought to circumvent the Washington oligarchy by building grass roots support, primarily through presidential nominations made by state legislatures and by establishment of partisan newspapers.[8] In addition, the nature of popular involvement in politics was changing. By the 1820s, elections had broadened in scope and interest. Most states ended property requirements for suffrage and extended the franchise to all adult white males. By 1826, for instance, 21 of the 24 states had free adult white male suffrage, or small poll taxes that were tantamount to free adult white male suffrage.[9] By the 1820s the number of elections increased, as legislatures abandoned their role in electing governors and federal presidential electors and turned those tasks over to the voters themselves. The sole state to resist statewide elections prior to the Civil War was South Carolina.[10]

Given the lack of consensus on the presidential succession in 1824, coupled with the grass roots work by Jackson and Calhoun among the increasingly interested voters, the congressional caucus lost its power. In the national election itself, four candidates emerged, and Jackson captured a plurality of both popular and electoral votes. The need for an election by the House, because of the lack of an Electoral College majority, spawned bargaining and bickering which served only to emphasize the inefficiency of the nation's political process. The House election itself defied the popular will by elevating not Jackson but the runner-up, John Quincy Adams.[11] Amidst the recriminations, one thing was clear, particularly to the Jacksonians: next time, organize more.

PARTY FORMATION AFTER 1824

The Role of Parties

A precise definition of political party, in general or in the context of Jacksonian America, exceeds the scope of this research. What is clear, however, is that durable, separate political groups emerged in the 1820s with varying political beliefs and philosophies. All these parties had two major goals: first, to gain power, and second, to keep it. The parties rising in the 1820s are best understood primarily as electoral machines.[12]

Several dimensions of party operation in the 1820s and 1830s merit elaboration. First, the organizational foundation of these parties was the central committee (on the county, city, state or national level), which held meetings, planned strategy and oversaw the day-to-day operations of the party. Such committees organized district, state or national conventions, which served in the 1820s and 1830s to widen public participation in the political process (particularly in the nominating process) and thus replaced the congressional caucus.

Second, the political parties formed organizations to create symbols of identification among voters with the party, to create a link between the political elite (which consisted of the central committee and its related party activists) and the electorate at large. The rationale for such symbols, of course, was mobilization of the voters, which was the obvious key to the major partisan goal of gaining and maintaining power. The number of elections and of voters increased dramatically in the 1820s, due to a soaring birth rate and a decline of property requirements for the franchise. Hence the job of mobilization became a paramount concern for political groups. The methods for mobilizing voters were many, but clearly attempts were made to increase voter awareness of and participation in the electoral process itself via county, state and national political conventions. The first national political convention was held by the Antimasonic Party in 1830. The National Republicans followed suit in 1831,

followed by the Democrats in early 1832. Although party bosses may have predetermined nominations, these conventions opened the political process by including greater numbers of people in party business, and thus were heralded at the time as great improvements over the legislative caucuses that had earlier selected party nominees.[13]

Third, the political parties of the age of Jackson faced one particular dilemma in their attempts to communicate with and mobilize voters. That dilemma was the continuation of antiparty sentiment, despite the obvious need for organizational activity. One loyal Jacksonian described this continuing antiparty spirit: "The lust for office is a crying evil in our day and generation. In my view, place should be sought by no man, and it is tolerable and honorable only when we are called to it by the unsolicited suffrages and spontaneous preferences of the people and their representatives."[14] Candidates who promoted themselves soon found they had a myriad of critics. When Caleb Cushing ran for Congress in Massachusetts in 1826 and dictated a newspaper editorial on his behalf, he was branded a self-promoter; that label stuck for years.[15] Martin Van Buren was a master of discreet, behind-the-scenes politicking, yet it is a testament to enduring antipartyism that this organizational genius won a reputation as a slick operator. When South Carolina Gov. James Hamilton Jr. was organizing his States' Rights and Free Trade Party in the late 1820s, he carefully tried to veil that organizational activity under the guise of inspecting state militia units.[16] Leaders such as Hamilton and Van Buren were no doubt ardent politicos, but they carefully tried to avoid the public spotlight and worked within their own ranks.

The Role of the Press in the New Parties

Central to the process of party organization in the 1820s and early 1830s was the partisan editor and the partisan newspaper. Editors frequently were part of the central committee that ran the party or were closely tied to the committee (e.g., the committee owned the paper, or hired the editor, or committee members wrote for the paper). In turn, newspapers served as the major vehicle for communicating with and, ideally, mobilizing voters.

Newspapers were a valuable vehicle for political communication in the age of Jackson for several reasons. First, the editor's concurrent role as a party leader (as a member of the central committee, for instance) as well as party propagandist facilitated coordination between party policy making, strategy and propaganda. As a member of the party's elite, the editor could well be expected to be knowledgeable about party philosophy, strategy, issues and meetings. Second, the newspaper could serve as a reliable spokesman for the local, state or national party. Alternative forms of communication, such as traveling agents, might be good

at stimulating voter turnout, but they were more diffuse than the party newspaper and singularly less authoritative. Indeed, the party faithful demanded that newspapers serve such a role.[17] Letters or word of mouth lacked the imprimatur associated with the paper emanating from the party elite. Third, newspapers were really the sole practical medium for interstate and even intrastate exchange of political ideas and arguments on a large scale. Postal regulations fostered this role for the newspaper, because editors could exchange papers for free; newspapers thus could circulate far beyond the small printing shop where they were produced.[18] In the days before the telegraph, newspaper exchanges provided the most regular form of political communication nationwide. And fourth, newspapers allowed party organization and promotion without tainting the individual candidates as self-promoters.

The Jacksonian Era Political Parties

The leading political parties in the United States by 1830 were the Democratic-Republicans and the National Republicans.[19] These two parties differed greatly on their view of the proper role of the federal government. National Republican leaders, such as John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, wanted an activist national government to promote manufacturing and internal improvements (such as roads and canals). The Democratic-Republicans were a diffuse lot, united primarily in the 1820s through their opposition to the nationalizing tendencies of the Adams administration and much of the so-called American System of protection and internal improvements espoused by the National Republicans. After the election of 1824, they were united primarily in promoting Jackson for the presidency.

A third party, the Antimasons, rose in the period after 1826 and quickly spread from New York into New England and into Pennsylvania and Ohio. The catalyst for the formation of this party was the disappearance in 1826 of William Morgan, a mason who lived in Batavia, N.Y. Morgan had threatened to divulge the secrets of his lodge to the public, and when his estranged lodge friends could not dissuade him from his plan, they kidnapped him. Many assumed he had been killed, although the charge was not proved. His disappearance alone did not start a political movement; rather, efforts by state and local officials, who just happened to be masons, to cover up the abduction and suspected murder led to charges of widespread masonic corruption. To many in western New York in late 1826 and early 1827, the institution of Freemasonry emerged as a hydra-headed monster: elitist, selfish and anti-democratic. Mixed with the evangelical religion of the western counties and the rural discontent with eastern rule based in Albany, the backlash to such supposedly entrenched power took on the character of a revival.[20] This new party made substan-

tial electoral gains in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Ohio in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

In South Carolina the States' Rights and Free Trade Party emerged in the 1820s as a radical states' rights group to attack protective tariff policy and to champion free trade causes. Only the National Republicans and the Democratic-Republicans actually were nationally based parties, and even their support varied regionally in the 1820s and early 1830s. The Antimasons and the States' Rightists nonetheless merit attention because they were important regional movements, affecting the two major national parties, and because they demonstrate well the basics of political organization in the age of Jackson.

The major political events and issues of this era merit a brief recounting. In 1824, when no presidential candidate won the required Electoral College majority, the House of Representatives ignored the leading vote-getter, Andrew Jackson, and elected the runner-up, John Quincy Adams. Jackson eventually defeated Adams in 1828. Once in office, Jackson faced a revolt within his own Democratic-Republican Party, led by John C. Calhoun, who wanted to succeed to the presidency in 1832. Jackson nonetheless won re-election in 1832, defeating the National Republican nominee, Henry Clay, and the Antimasonic nominee, William Wirt. Major issues of the era centered on the role of the federal government in national life, particularly in banking and commerce. Jackson's dislike for banks led to his attacks on the Second Bank of the United States, a quasi-public institution which controlled the nation's currency supply. Disagreements over tariff policy led some southerners to espouse the theory of nullification, a pseudo-constitutional claim that any state could nullify unpalatable federal laws.

PARTIES AND PRESS IN JACKSONIAN AMERICA

Editors as Party Leaders

Editors were particularly important in the rise of both the Antimasonic and Jacksonian parties, although they played key roles in both the National Republican and States' Rights parties as well. On the national, state and local levels, editors frequently directed — either alone or with others — their party's day-to-day operations. The activities of national editors, such as Duff Green of the *U.S. Telegraph* and Francis P. Blair of the Washington *Globe*, were most visible due to the increasing competition over the presidency after 1824 and to their own strong personalities. But on the local level, even in small rural counties, editors were among the party's elite, part of the party's core.

The National Editors. The Jacksonian strategy for 1828 rested to a

great extent in repeating charges that Adams had stolen the election in the House in 1825 and in exploiting the weaknesses of the administration. The Jacksonians were hampered in this goal, however, because they had no newspaper organ in Washington, D.C., to lead the attack. The two leading capital newspapers, the *National Intelligencer* and the *National Journal*, both supported the nationalistic policies of the Adams administration. Consequently the Democratic-Republicans established the Washington, D.C., *U.S. Telegraph* in 1826 as a national forum for the 1828 Jackson campaign. Its editor, Duff Green, maintained a steady correspondence with Jacksonians nationwide, urging them to organize and vote. He also distributed thousands of copies of his *Telegraph Extra*, extolling Jackson and assailing the administration of John Quincy Adams.[21]

The *Globe* became the official Jackson newspaper in late 1830, following disenchantment with Green's *Telegraph* for its failure to support administration policy and for its obvious preference for John C. Calhoun for the presidential succession in 1832. Amos Kendall, a member of the president's Kitchen Cabinet, claimed that Green by late 1829 was trying to build political alliances to assure Calhoun would replace Jackson as president in 1832. Loyal Jacksonians in the states began to believe that Green was not an ideal party spokesman. The Philadelphia *Inquirer* editor announced in early 1830 that he supported the administration but that he had never liked Green or the *Telegraph*. Another administration paper, the Greensborough, N.C., *Patriot*, noted that Green was "contentious" in dealing with other Jacksonians and thus did not really serve the party. By the middle of 1830, Kendall had adequate support from inside the administration to establish a new party paper in Washington.[22]

With the advent of the *Globe* as the official administration newspaper, Duff Green attempted to take over the Democratic Party organization so that Calhoun could win the party's 1832 presidential nomination. By the summer of 1831, Green had begun to implement a three-pronged strategy to win the presidency for Calhoun. First, he tried to minimize the nullification issues, so closely tied to Calhoun, so that Northerners would not desert the South Carolinian.[23] Second, he tried to establish newspapers friendly to Calhoun in Pennsylvania and Virginia, key states in the Democratic-Republican coalition. Jackson's longtime opposition to the Second Bank of the United States had undermined his popularity to some extent in Pennsylvania, the home of the bank, and so Green tried to persuade Stephen Simpson, a former editor and longtime Jackson supporter, to establish a weekly newspaper to support Calhoun. Simpson refused to take the bait, even though he had become disillusioned with Jackson.[24] In Virginia, Green succeeded in securing the establishment of a Calhoun newspaper in Richmond to counteract the pro-administration *Enquirer*. Green arranged for a Lynchburg editor, Richard K. Crallé, to start the Richmond *Times*, lending him money to start the paper and

even obtaining subscribers for him. Green also tried to start county-level organizations in Virginia to create the semblance of a grass roots movement for Calhoun.[25] This organizational work in 1831 and 1832 did not work; Simpson later supported Clay, and Cralle's newspaper never equaled Ritchie's well-entrenched *Enquirer*. The county organizations in Virginia were never more than a dream of Green's. But Green's failure does not detract from the role he held; he was the chief Calhoun organizer in the country.

Green had never placed all his hopes for Calhoun in the Democratic Party, and his third strategy was to win the Antimasonic presidential nomination for Calhoun. Green traveled to Philadelphia, New York and New Haven in late 1831, assuring Antimasonic leaders that even though Calhoun refused to endorse their party he would nonetheless be a good candidate. When the Antimasons proved smarter than he expected, Green even made a last ditch effort to pack their national convention, but that plan was never more than a long shot, and it failed.[26]

By the middle of 1832, Green finally abandoned the Calhoun candidacy and formed a marriage of convenience with anti-Jackson forces. Without endorsing either Henry Clay, the National Republican nominee, or William Wirt, the Antimasonic presidential nominee, Green issued a *Telegraph Extra*, which circulated for 10 weeks before the November 1832 election. He distributed it nationwide, saying he hoped to reach "every hamlet in the country" with the extra "to counteract the falsehoods" of the Jackson administration and the extra editions of the *Globe* edited by the Jackson administration supporters.[27] Green flooded the mails with his newspaper extras. He received strong support from some anti-Jacksonians, and his planned press run of 10,000 extras soon swelled to 30,000. Green tried to contact anyone who might oppose Jackson; he wrote to more than 70 National Republican county leaders in Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania alone, seeking names of potential subscribers. He wrote to all opposition members of Congress from New York state, again seeking names of willing readers.[28] Distribution of the extras remained a problem; Green did not have a well-organized distribution network or many allies outside South Carolina. Many of the extras were never delivered, but his failure does not alter the fact that he was running the Calhoun campaign.

Meanwhile Francis P. Blair of the Washington *Globe* had assumed the role of political chairman of the Jacksonian Party. A circulation war with the *Telegraph* in 1831 and the president's clear break with Calhoun had signaled to the party faithful that Blair was the president's true representative. Blair's support for Jackson was emphatic; in the prospectus and in the first issue of the paper, Blair promised a "discussion and maintenance of the principles" that brought Jackson to office and noted that widespread support for Jackson's re-election "leaves no doubt as to the

individual whom the Republicans of the country require to assume the attitude of candidate."[29] Jackson himself told one follower, "I expect you all to patronize the *Globe*."[30] And another Jacksonian in Washington recruited subscribers soon after the paper was established:

> We have here a new paper, called the *Globe*, edited by the late editor of the Frankfort *Argus*. He is a man of talent, a gentleman, sagacious, discreet and powerful. He comes here by *invitation*. We are his supporters. I wish you to be. Use your influence for him and let your paper notice him.[31]

By late 1831, just one year after he had begun the *Globe*, Blair was receiving requests from Democrats who asked him to intercede with administration officials on their behalf for appointments to West Point, postmasterships, postal contracts and so on.[32]

Blair's biggest job was in the 1832 election, during which he distributed 30 issues of the *Globe Extra* in the six months before the election. He vowed to circulate the *Extra* in "every neighborhood of the United States" so that the people "may know and appreciate the measures and principles which guide Gen. Jackson in the administration of the government."[33] Blair relied on the Post Office, controlled by Jacksonian appointees, to circulate the *Globe Extra*; Jacksonian congressmen franked the paper while Congress was in session, and Jacksonian editors nationwide published the *Extra* prospectus and sold subscriptions to it. Phineas Allen, editor of the Pittsfield, Mass., *Sun*, urged his readers to subscribe to the *Globe Extra*. "It is time for the people to take the alarm."[34] Blair sent 10,000 copies of the *Extra* to Thomas Ritchie in Richmond to distribute in Virginia. Sen. Thomas Hart Benton distributed prospectuses for the *Extra* in Missouri. And by mid-May 1832, Blair announced that the *Extra*'s circulation was nearly 6,000, a substantial figure for early 19th-century newspaper circulation.[35]

Although the Washington, D.C., *National Intelligencer* favored Jackson's defeat in 1832, its editors did not provide the kind of political leadership demonstrated by either Blair or Green. Joseph Gales Jr. and William Winston Seaton, editors of the *Intelligencer*, belonged not to the new politics of the Jacksonian era but to an older, less rough-and-tumble world of politics. They denounced the aggressive and combative politics characterizing the two-party system after 1824, and preferred to offer analysis and essays rather than work as strategists and organizers. Shortly after Jackson's first inauguration in 1829, they wrote: "Nothing so hateful has even heretofore been seen in this government, as the operation of that system of party discipline, of espionage, or denunciation, or cruel calumny, which has, of late, influenced the proscription of good and honored men, to make room for mere partisans."[36] Consequently they provided no national coordination for the Clay campaign. The failure of Gales and Seaton to work for Clay meant that, on a national level, no major effort for Clay existed.

Political Editors in the States. Outside the nation's capital, all parties depended upon editors to coordinate political operations. Throughout the nation, local editors organized and spoke for the parties, performing services in their towns and counties comparable to the work done by Blair and Green at the national level. One of the most successful Democratic Party machines was the Albany Regency, Martin Van Buren's political base in New York state. The mainstay of the Regency machine was the Albany *Argus*, run by Edwin Croswell and Azariah C. Flagg. Croswell, who became editor of the paper in 1824, emerged soon thereafter as a major party spokesman and an important part of the Regency's inner circle (which included Silas Wright, Martin Van Buren, Benjamin F. Butler and A.C. Flagg). Regency critics attributed great political power to Croswell; James Watson Webb of the New York *Courier and Enquirer* claimed, "There is no office to fill — no executive to nominate — no political plan to organize — and no point to carry by the state, even in the National Councils, that is not first arranged in the office of the Albany *Argus*."[37] Webb exaggerated because he was trying to depict Croswell as a tyrant, but the general thrust of Webb's complaint was valid: Croswell held a central post in the Regency.

Although Croswell officially edited the newspaper alone, and only his name appeared on the masthead, the paper was a product of the entire Regency, and other members of the inner circle, including Flagg and Wright, wrote for the paper. Flagg emerged by the late 1820s as a co-editor in practice if not in name. In the early 1820s Flagg had edited the Plattsburg *Republican* and served in the state legislature. By 1826, when he became state comptroller, he moved to Albany and soon was a ranking member of the Regency inner circle.

Flagg and Croswell were a formidable team; they were the only two members of the Regency inner circle who never left New York state to assume national office, and thus they were to a great extent in charge of the day-to-day operation not only of the paper but of the party. Members of the public, as well as Regency insiders, recognized the position in the party of the two. One New Yorker asked Croswell to use his influence to obtain a state patronage appointment for a friend, and editors throughout the state relied on both Croswell and Flagg for gathering information and for financial assistance in maintaining their papers. Flagg traveled some through the state, visiting editors and other party faithful. Editors also wrote to both Croswell and Flagg providing information about politics at both the county and town levels for inclusion in the *Argus*. The paper in Albany served as a hub for New York's Jacksonians.[38]

In other states, such as Virginia, South Carolina, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, Jacksonian editors emerged as leaders in their state parties. Thomas Ritchie, editor of the Richmond *Enquirer*, was a leading member of the Richmond Junto, which dominated the Virginia state

Democratic Party for a generation. Ritchie's power was well known; when Martin Van Buren began building his political coalition in the early 1820s, he sought out Ritchie in his attempts to form a New York-Virginia alliance. In the early 1830s, Gov. John Flood, a Calhounite, attributed the state's strong support for Jackson in part to Ritchie.[39]

In South Carolina, editors assumed the leadership of the Jackson Democratic Party and were active in trying to defeat the nullification movement. Benjamin F. Perry, editor of the Greenville, S.C., *Mountaineer*, M.D. Richardson, editor of the Sumterville *Southern Whig*, and Richard Yeadon, of the Charleston *Courier*, were all prominent in the unionist cause in the Palmetto State. Perry was considered by nullifiers as their greatest opponent in the up country.[40] Their political opponents were political editors too. One of the early organizers of the States' Rights and Free Trade Party was Henry Laurens Pinckney, editor of the Charleston *Mercury*. Pinckney served for years in the state legislature, was speaker of the state House of Representatives from 1830 to 1832, and there helped lead the nullification party — all the time also serving as newspaper editor. He also served as mayor of Charleston and ran his party's committee on printing and publications in 1832.[41]

In Massachusetts the *Statesman* newspaper junto, headed by David Henshaw, Nathaniel Greene and Andrew Dunlap, controlled Jacksonian Party operations in the 1820s. After these three received patronage appointments from Jackson in 1829, Charles G. Greene assumed editorship of the paper and inherited the tasks of organizing party meetings and drawing up party tickets. Suffolk County Jacksonian meetings were held in Greene's newspaper office, and he served in the state legislature while still editing his newspaper.[42]

Throughout other states Jacksonian editors fulfilled the same type of tasks. In New Hampshire Isaac Hill of the New Hampshire *Patriot* was one of the leading Jacksonian organizers in the late 1820s. Stephen Simpson, an early Jackson supporter in Philadelphia, was part of the three-man Jackson Committee of Correspondence there in 1828, and in Pittsburgh, editor D. Lynch organized a Jackson club in 1831 and sought subscriptions for the *Globe*.[43]

Jacksonians were not alone in recognizing the importance of political work by editors. In Massachusetts, National Republican editors tried to compensate for the lack of organizational zeal by Gales and Seaton in Washington, D.C. In the summer of 1830 three Boston National Republican editors (John B. Davis of the *Boston Patriot*, Nathan Hale of the Boston *Advertiser*, and A.H. Everett of the *North American Review*) sent a circular letter throughout northern and western states urging that National Republicans start political organization for the 1832 election. The trio offered to help set up party committees and asked for reports on public opinion and the status of party organization. Both Hale and Davis

printed extra issues of their newspapers, which were circulated statewide during election campaigns in the late 1820s and early 1830s.[44]

Even in counties and small towns editors were political leaders. For example, editors assumed leadership in an intra-party feud that rocked Essex County, Mass., for about two years in the early 1830s. Essex County, a heavily entrenched National Republican stronghold, was the scene of a party stalemate from 1830 to 1832. At the center of this intra-party dispute was a long-contested congressional election in Essex North District, which comprised the northern half of the county. Divisions within the dominant National Republican Party produced two National Republican candidates for Congress in 1830; in a three-way race with one Jacksonian candidate, no one could win the legally required majority of votes, and so a series of 12 special elections ensued over the next two years in attempts to break the deadlock.[45]

The lengthy dispute centered on the country's political press. Two of the National Republican editors in Essex North emerged as the major spokesmen for the traditional party nominee, while two others led the campaign for the insurgent candidate, Caleb Cushing. Cushing himself referred to the editor of the Newburyport *Herald*, E.W. Allen, as his major campaign director. The editor of the Haverhill *Iris*, E. Harriman, was a Cushing organizer and strategist, traveling throughout the congressional district, giving speeches and trying to win votes for Cushing. In retaliation, the traditionalist editors responded in kind, traveling through the district to undermine Cushing's support.[46]

Editors directed the Antimasonic Party from its birth. Following the disappearance of William Morgan in 1826, western New York editors began organizing protest meetings. David C. Miller, editor of the Batavia *Republican Advocate*, was a member of the first Genesee County Antimasonic central committee. In Monroe County, editor Thurlow Weed helped organize a county committee, which eventually became the basis of the state central committee. James Percival, editor of the Livingston *Register* in Genesee, helped organize that town's first Antimasonic meeting in early 1827 and served on the county central committee for three years. E.J. Fowle, editor of the *Yates Republican* in Penn Yan, was a party founder who served for five years on his county's central committee.[47] The major organizer among New York Antimasons was Thurlow Weed, who first edited a paper in Rochester, later took over the party's major political organ in Albany, dominated the state central committee and gained control over the party's political machinery by early 1829. Weed was the architect of the New York Antimasonic Party's coalition with the National Republicans in 1832 and was instrumental in picking William Wirt for the Antimasonic presidential nomination in 1832.[48]

The Party Press and Symbols of Identification

Political activists in the Jacksonian era considered the partisan newspaper as the key to inspiring and mobilizing the electorate. Martin Van Buren, one of the major architects of the Democratic-Republican party, argued that with the political newspapers, "we can endure a thousand convulsions; without them, we might as well hang our harps on willows."[49] As such, the political newspaper was necessary for creating party identification and, ideally, loyalty among the population at large. The process of creating identity was threefold: (a) establishing newspapers; (b) subsidizing them; and (c) competing among political elites for the attention of the electorate via newspaper debates.

The National Press. The Jacksonians subsidized the *U.S. Telegraph* to ensure its continued operation. Green in particular benefited from the lucrative congressional printing contracts system (which operated from 1819 to 1846). Each house of Congress elected its own printer (always a partisan editor) who executed the printing (bills, journals, reports and other documents) at a sizable profit which subsidized the party press. Jacksonians in Congress gave Green the Senate printing in 1827 and the House printing in 1829. The contracts were large; between 1819 and 1846, $2.5 million went to Washington publishers. During the Twenty-Second Congress (1831-33), Green received $34,152.51 for the Senate printing and $108,566.14 for the House printing, in addition to $6,000 for the Supreme Court printing. The actual profit derived is not clear, although congressional investigations in 1840 estimated profits at about 24 percent.[50]

With Jackson's support, the new party paper, the Washington *Globe*, appeared Dec. 7, 1830, edited by Francis P. Blair, an old associate of Kendall's and former editor of the Frankfort, Ky., *Argus of Western America*. The administration subsidized the paper, funneling departmental printing contracts to Blair's office. During the Twenty-Second Congress, Blair received slightly more than half of all printing ordered by the executive departments ($47,224.42). Blair continued to receive this executive patronage throughout the Jackson and Van Buren administrations, averaging about $25,000 a year throughout the 1830s.[51]

The State and Local Press. Because of the decentralized nature of politics in the Jacksonian era, the political parties worked hard to establish and maintain local newspapers. The Jacksonian coalition in the 1820s established new presses in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and North Carolina, while gaining the support of previously established newspapers such as the Albany *Argus*, the Nashville *Republican*, the Boston *Statesman*, the New Hampshire *Patriot*, the Richmond *Enquirer*, and the *Argus of Western America*. By 1828, Jacksonians had newspapers in every state promoting Democratic candidates on both the

national and local levels.[52]

For the Antimasons, the establishment of newspapers was a *sine qua non* of party organization. The Antimasonic crusade against Freemasons put the new party in opposition to both Jacksonians and National Republicans, and so Antimasons could not rely on previously established partisan papers to present their views to the electorate. In early 1828 the LeRoy, N.Y., Antimasonic meeting delegates lamented the "entire subjugation of the press to Freemasonry,"[53] and William Henry Seward, an early New York state Antimasonic leader, argued that the press was the only channel to the people, "without which Antimasonry never can gain the public favor." The first New York state Antimasonic convention, in 1829, concluded its address to the public by stressing the necessity of partisan newspapers:

> Free presses constitute the means upon which the country must rely to uproot and overthrow Free Masonry. They enlighten and stimulate public opinion. All the counties in this and the neighboring states, in which Free Presses have been established, are now contributing their best efforts to exterminate the Institution (of Freemasonry). They are multiplying with considerable alacrity, and the committee deem the continued augmentation of their members, an object of primary and paramount importance.[54]

Antimasonic presses grew rapidly, rising from only two in New York state in 1826 to 70 in 1832. New York state Antimasonic leaders were particularly interested in maintaining a reliable party journal in Albany, the state capital, believing that a paper there would counteract the Jacksonian *Argus* and provide leadership for Antimasonic papers throughout the state. "Say what you will," wrote one Antimason. "The cue will be taken from the paper of the party" in Albany.[55]

Antimasons in other states also established newspapers. In Massachusetts Antimasons believed they could not carry on "regular and systematic operations as a party" without a daily newspaper in Boston, and so they established the *Advocate* in early 1832. They also established Antimasonic newspapers in Springfield, Lynn, Worcester and Plymouth. The establishment of these various newspapers was not easy, but the effort expended by Plymouth Antimasons in starting their own party paper was greatest by far. Plymouth party members spent a full year trying to raise the capital needed to establish their own weekly newspaper and to find sufficient subscribers. They finally succeeded, only a few weeks before the 1832 election and only after considerable effort. They persevered because they believed that a newspaper was absolutely essential to their electoral hopes.[56]

In the South, and particularly in South Carolina, states' rightists established newspapers to espouse free trade and to promote the pseudo-constitutional doctrine that an individual state could nullify federal law. Nullifiers were instrumental in establishing a variety of newspapers in

South Carolina in the late 1820s and early 1830s, most notably in Greenville, Camden, Columbia and Charleston. To counteract the nullifiers, loyal Jacksonians established rival papers in Columbia, Georgetown and Sumterville.[57]

Subsidies to the State and Local Press. Parties expended great effort to subsidize and maintain friendly papers. To allow a paper to fail would symbolize a failure of party momentum and strength. And when individual editors wanted to retire from their posts, party loyalists tried to assure that the paper remained in the hands of a trustworthy editor. When the ailing John Brazier Davis, editor of the Boston *Patriot*, wanted to sell the paper, Massachusetts National Republicans feared that the paper might fall into the wrong hands. One of Daniel Webster's friends warned the senator:

> I have no hesitation in saying that the Boston *Patriot* is the most powerful engine which can be used to direct the politics of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont, and it is a most powerful influence in many other states. Hundreds and Thousands of Old Republicans, as they are styled, read this as Holy Writ and they read nothing else . . . .
>
> If our friends mean to sustain themselves in New England, they ought not to suffer the present opportunity to possess this press escape them.[58]

The loss of a party paper could well be calamitous. A Binghamton, N.Y., Jacksonian described the party's plight there:

> Jackson stock stands high here — but we have met with a misfortune in our paper. One of the proprietors has sold out to J.A. Collier! Collier's father (the old editor of the Litchfield *Monitor*) has become the editor and the Adams blue light battery is already opened upon us. We are, however, making arrangements for another paper, and I think we shall have one.[59]

Consequently, political activists were seriously concerned with the economic well-being of their papers and consistently relied on patronage to subsidize their papers. The sources of subsidy to the state and local press included: (a) federal patronage; (b) state printing contracts; (c) donations from party members and other interested parties; and (d) joint stock ownership of the paper by party members themselves.

Under both the Jackson and Van Buren administrations, the federal government subsidized state and local newspapers by distributing printing contracts from governmental notices and advertisements. The secretary of state, for instance, chose two or three newspapers in each state to print the laws of the United States for each session of Congress. Although the payments for such printing were not large ($278 for the Twenty-Second Congress, for instance), editors were eager for the printing contracts. When Jackson entered office in 1829, loyal editors nationwide vied for the State Department contracts, and the state party leaders clearly expected that the printing of the laws would go to Jackson newspapers.[60]

Other executive departments, particularly Treasury, War, Navy and Post Office, had various notices and advertisements printed in papers nationwide, and the Post Office gave contracts for supplies for post offices to Jacksonian editors. Edwin Croswell, editor of the Albany *Argus*, received $1,185.26 from federal printing contracts during the Twenty-Second Congress. Shadrach Penn Jr., editor of the Louisville *Advertiser*, received $2,325.91 during the same time for supplying post offices in the West. Executive department patronage went to scores of other Jacksonian editors throughout the country.[61]

The exact profits from each contract are difficult to determine, although in one case, precise figures are available. Beginning in 1829, Charles G. Greene, editor of the Boston *Statesman* and the *Morning Post*, furnished paper blanks, printed materials, twine and wrapping paper to post offices in four New England states, and his profits exceeded $1,000 a year throughout the 1830s. The patronage Green received signaled the national administration's efforts to buoy its supporters. Green was a Jacksonian loyalist in a state overwhelmingly controlled by the National Republicans, and thus the lack of a strong Jackson party in Massachusetts necessitated the infusion of funds from outside the state. Likewise, funds went to Shadrach Penn, at the Louisville *Advertiser*, to promote an administration organ in the home state of Henry Clay, a leader of the anti-Jacksonian forces.[62]

The importance of this patronage should not be underestimated, even when profits were small. In the early 1820s, Thurlow Weed, as a struggling rural editor, found that two or three dollars a week in gross revenues were of great importance in helping his paper and in supporting his family.[63] In some instances, federal largess included appointments to federal office, such as postmaster or customs official, and in these cases, editors either continued to publish their papers or turned them over to other loyal Jacksonians. In all, about 30 Jacksonian editors received some sort of patronage office.[64]

The full extent of federal patronage probably did not exceed $125,000 a year in the early 1830s (excluding salaries of editors holding patronage jobs). Although federal largess was distributed nationwide, it could not support an entire political press system. Local subsidies on the state and county levels were the mainstay for small papers, and various states provided patronage to the press in a pattern similar to the federal practice. State printing contracts went to editors friendly to the legislative majority, and governors awarded executive department printing contracts to allied editors. Additionally, some editors held well-paying patronage jobs while still editing their papers.

The state of Pennsylvania, for instance, spent about $15,000 a year on printing in the late 1820s and 1830s, and the patronage consistently went to Jacksonian editors. Under the Pennsylvania Constitution the governor

appointed most county officials, and numerous editors held such positions. Even relatively minor jobs could bring in several hundreds of dollars in fees per year and thus subsidize loyal papers.[65]

In New York, Albany *Argus* editor Edwin Croswell held the state printing contracts from 1823 until 1838 and averaged a profit of approximately 20 percent. The Albany Regency also subsidized papers statewide; about $1,000 was spent annually on printing, although no one paper received large amounts of money. On the county level, Regency editors often received lucrative job printing when the Regency machine controlled the county courthouse.[66]

Other state printers included the editor of the Columbia, S.C., *Times*, ($1,200 in 1830; $2,450 in 1831); Lawrence and Lemay of the Raleigh, N.C., *Star* ($900 a year); Thomas Ritchie of the Richmond *Enquirer*; Isaac Hill of the New Hampshire *Patriot*; and Adams and Hudson of the Boston *Columbia Centinel*. In each case, these editors were party loyalists whose papers were vital party organs.[67]

Private donations augmented federal and state patronage to the press. In Massachusetts, the National Republicans' leading newspaper in the early 1830s, the Boston *Advertiser*, received extensive financial support from wealthy party members. In 1831, editor Nathan Hale (nephew and namesake of the Revolutionary war hero) purchased the Boston *Patriot*, and in 1832 he absorbed the *Massachusetts Journal and Tribune*; the money for these acquisitions came from wealthy industrialists within the party.[68]

In South Carolina, pro-administration Democrats (Unionists) subsidized the Charleston City *Gazette* from 1830 to 1832. But the largest donations in South Carolina came from the States' Rights and Free Trade associations, which were the foundation for the nullification movement in that state. When James Henry Hammond felt he needed a larger salary as editor of the Columbia *Times*, the state nullifiers raised half the increase, and then convinced the paper's proprietor to pay the remainder. And Gov. James Hamilton Jr. promised financial support to any new or old newspaper that supported the nullifiers' views. In 1832 Hamilton and several friends established the Charleston *States' Rights And Free Trade Evening Post* to supplement the Charleston *Mercury* in the nullification cause.[69]

The donations from Nicholas Biddle, president of the Second Bank of the United States, stirred controversy unlike other subsidies. In the early 1830s the Bank became the focus of the Jacksonian assault on privilege and aristocracy, and so Biddle turned to the press to argue the Bank's case. He justified paying editors to publish articles favorable to the Bank:

> If a grocer wishes to apprize the public that he had a fresh supply of figs, the printer whom he employed, for that purpose, never thinks of giving his labor for

> nothing, but charges him for his trouble in inserting the advertisement. If the Bank, in like manner, wishes a printer to insert information about its concerns, why should it not pay him for his trouble?"[70]

The exact amount of expenditures by Biddle on behalf of the Bank remain somewhat unclear, but congressional investigations in 1834 detailed some of the payments to editors. In all, the Bank president spent about $50,000 from late 1829 through 1832 on disseminating Bank propaganda, and most of that money went to partisan editors, primarily National Republicans. Biddle also tried to woo Jacksonian editors, but without any real success. And when Biddle tried to keep secret some questionable loans to two Jacksonian editors in New York City, who had switched from an anti-Bank to a pro-Bank position (in defiance of the national administration), he received criticism not only from Jacksonians but also from his own allies who felt he had meddled a bit too much.[71] Patronage was not used to buy support, most felt, but to provide aid to those who were already in service to a particular party. Patronage was not a bribe but rather an intrinsic part of a press-party relationship.

As a new political party, without control of state government printing, the Antimasons relied on joint stock companies to establish and subsidize their presses. The Antimasonic *Daily Advocate* in Boston was established by a joint stock company comprised of the state's party leaders. The new proprietors proudly announced their sponsorship of the paper in its first issue. Plymouth, Mass., Antimasons circulated a subscription and stock proposal throughout their county in 1832 seeking to raise enough capital to start a newspaper. Most contributions totaled about $10; in all, $600 was raised for the necessary capital for the new paper. Other Antimasonic papers established by joint stock companies included the Albany *Evening Journal* and papers in Pennsylvania. It is significant to note that most stockholders did not expect a profit from their paper rather, most just wanted it to survive to serve the party.[72]

This extensive system of subsidies, comprised of federal and state printing contracts, donations and outright ownership by the party, was rarely kept secret. Recipients of the subsidies were well known to the public, and legislative printing contracts were awarded only after a formal vote.

Competition for the Attention of the Populace. The major effort expended by parties to establish and subsidize newspapers was based on the belief that such papers were really the sole means for winning over the electorate. Establishing and subsidizing newspapers was the means to an end — proselytizing the electorate. The political activists of the Jacksonian era so deeply believed in the righteousness of their cause that they had no doubt that the electorate would agree with them. Success was not automatic, they felt, but it would come eventually. One Antimasonic editor in New York noted that his task seemed almost hopeless at times, but he vowed to fight on to win over the public. "Constant drop-

ping will wear away stones," he proclaimed.[73] The Jacksonian editor James Gordon Bennett argued that Antimasonry would decline in western New York once more Jacksonian newspapers were established there.

This struggle for the support of the electorate demanded the circulation of political newspapers not just in major cities, but in counties and hamlets. And the presence of one party's journal in a town or city seemed to demand that any other party establish a rival journal as a symbol of partisan activity. The major cities of the nation all had competing political newspapers in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Even Boston, an overwhelmingly National Republican city in the early 1830s, had both Antimasonic and Jacksonian daily newspapers. In New York state, 65 percent of all county seats had rival newspapers in 1830; and editors without competition at home usually found a nearby rival for debate. When the Lyons, N.Y., *Countryman*, an Antimasonic newspaper, suspended publication in late 1831, its longtime Jacksonian rival at the *Western Argus* turned his attention to fighting the Antimasonic editor of the nearby Penn Yan *Enquirer*. And the Jacksonian editor in Cortland, N.Y., debated not only his crosstown rival, but also two anti-Jackson newspapers in Homer, four miles away. Other states repeated this same pattern of competition among political newspapers.[74]

In general, the large number of rival newspapers and the debate among them reflected the strong competition among political parties in the Jacksonian era. Party activists, particularly those on central committees, were loath to cede any advantage to their competitors, and rival newspapers are best understood within the context of party rivalry.

The actual impact of these newspapers on the populace is unclear. Circulations of these newspapers were not large, and in no way did the political press achieve the kind of mass circulation that characterized the penny press which arose in the 1820s and 1830s. However, readership was not limited to those who subscribed, for reading rooms and taverns offered copies for any and all to peruse.

Perhaps the best view of the political press and its impact is in the context of the political revolution of the 1820s and 1830s. That period saw a dramatic increase in voter participation, both on the local and national levels, and a remarkable increase in popular participation in the political process, primarily through party conventions (from the local to the national level). The political press was part of an exceptionally dynamic political era, and political activists believed in the efficacy of newspaper propaganda.

The Definition of News in the Political Press. The content of these political papers reflected the societal context in which they existed. "News" was not a factual or purportedly objective rendition of the day's events; rather, "news" was partisan advocacy that could help achieve a

party's major goal of mobilizing the voters. Twentieth-century notions of objectivity, for instance, were both inappropriate and irrelevant.

Given the need for, and importance attached to, partisan content, editors often disdained any paper that did not take sides. The Jacksonian editor of the *Western Argus* in Lyons, N.Y., condemned a neutral paper he had received through the mails:

> We have glanced at its editorial columns, and find it precisely what we most of all things abhor and detest, to wit, a neutral paper. It pretends to be all things to all men. Now we would wish to be civil to the editor, but we can never consent to an exchange with any such paper, for we verily think they should all, one and all, be thrown out of the pale of the press. If we are asked why, we answer that the Editor must be doing violence to his own opinions, or else he had none to abuse; and in either case, he is hardly entitled to the common civilities of his typographical brethren. If he will turn anti (mason) or democrat, we will exchange with him with pleasure.[75]

A.W. Thayer, editor of the *Essex Gazette* in Haverhill, Mass., proclaimed that an editor was "a political preacher" and "a sentinel placed in his country's watch tower" who had a duty to "zealously urge every argument in favor of his principles which may be suggested in his mind."[76] Editors naturally varied in their ability to stir passions or inculcate party loyalty, but one of the most articulate was Francis P. Blair of the Washington *Globe*. He followed the Jacksonian philosophy of federal laissez faire. The *Globe*'s inscription was "The World is governed too much," and among the institutions governing too much was the behemoth Second Bank of the United States. Blair spared no venom in attacking the Bank, claiming that it represented American and English aristocrats and was mismanaged and corrupt. In a 16-part series of essays following Jackson's veto of the Bank recharter bill in 1832, Blair argued that the Bank was under foreign control, had subverted much of the nation's press through bribes, had speculated wildly and was too powerful to belong to a democratic nation:

> The history of the operations of the Bank of the United States in the West, proves one great and prominent fact, which we would impress upon the recollection of the people in that quarter of the Union. If a human heart could be committed to the group of the Board of Directors at Philadelphia, it could not have a more absolute control over the circulation of the blood in the body, than they have over the currency of the West . . . . Secret orders issued by the Board in Philadelphia could deprive any member of the confederacy in the west of its circulating medium. It can depress, at a word, the value of every species of property in this section of the Union through this control . . . and its market, therefore, may be said to be entirely subject to the power of the merchants who manage the Bank at Philadelphia.[77]

National tariff policy also induced strong feelings. The editor of the Yorkville, S.C., *Banner*, a nullification paper, claimed that the Constitution, because of national tariff policy, "has been perverted from its legitimate purposes, and made an instrument of legislation, partial, unjust and tyrannical."[78] And the editor of the Macon, Ga., *Advertiser* de-

nounced Northerners for the 1832 tariff: "They have mistaken our moderation for pusilanity, and our devotion to the Union for a craven dependence upon their physical strength."[79]

The counter-argument which followed such strong advocacy led to a refinement and elaboration of ideas and opinion. When Francis P. Blair began the *Globe* in December 1830, he dealt with the Bank primarily in terms of his own experiences fighting it in Kentucky. In one sense, then, Blair's early attacks against the Bank traveled through the filter of his Kentucky background; he repeatedly discussed how the Bank's heavy-handed credit constrictions hurt Kentuckians in the early 1820s. The Bank, in Blair's view, was a monster that symbolized all that he and his allies had opposed in Kentucky politics.[80]

During the course of argument and counter-argument in the next two years, Blair never abandoned his longtime hatred of the Bank. He constantly returned to the issue of Bank policy in Kentucky, but his thinking expanded for two reasons. First, throughout 1831 and 1832, political events (particularly the attempt to recharter the Bank) demanded and facilitated a closer and more thorough examination of the Bank. And second, the debate between the *Globe* and pro-Bank newspapers such as the Philadelphia *National Gazette* and the Washington, D.C., *National Intelligencer*, forced Blair to move beyond his provincial, Kentucky-based assessment and deal with the Bank as a national institution. When the *National Intelligencer* editors claimed that the Bank had provided a uniform national currency, Blair responded by studying the variable credit standards utilized nationwide by the Bank.[81] When the *National Gazette* defended the Bank's general policies, Blair responded by launching into an investigation of its property holdings, and examined the activities of branch bank managers throughout the various states.[82] At the same time, Blair began to articulate a more abstract theme of states' rights in dealing with the Bank; no longer was it just Kentucky vs. the Bank, but it became a broader issue going to the very heart of the Constitution and federal-state relations.[83] The competition among political editors on a wide range of issues produced such refinement and continued analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

To the French traveler, Alexis de Tocqueville, the United States was an intriguing nation, representing a "great democratic revolution" based on the sovereignty of the people. Tocqueville believed that the press was the "constitutive element" of American liberty because it provided the communication needed to nurture democracy, especially in such a large territory. The press "affords a means of intercourse between those who hear and address each other without ever coming into immediate con-

tact," he wrote.[84]

As Tocqueville noted, the press was at the very center of American political life in the Jacksonian era. Indeed, party and press were so intertwined that both are best understood in relation to each other. Newspapers were the sole formal channel between party and populace and served as the most important forum for the discussion of party policies and ideals. Moreover, editors served a vital task in organizing these new electoral machines that arose in the 1820s and 1830s. In turn, parties nurtured their party papers — helping to establish them and subsidizing them — as a means to the end of converting and mobilizing the voters. The new political parties that grew out of the election of 1824 needed new mechanisms for creating bonds with the electorate, and the party press was ideally suited for the task.

News, too, is best understood in the context of the relationship between party and press. Given the mutual needs and mutual obligations between party and press, news was naturally partisan and advocatory in nature.

The experience of the political press also suggests some larger lessons pertinent to communications history in general. First, the press is best understood in the context of its time and environment. Contextual studies view editors or mass media outlets not as the center of the world (as many biographical works do) but rather focus on the interactions between a variety of societal groups (in this case, editors, party activists and to some extent, the public). Historical studies which avoid such a contextual approach are really quite limited and limiting. Second, the concept of news might well be seen as an outgrowth of structural constraints — how the press is organized and funded, whom it actually serves — rather than as some kind of never-changing package. Thus both the partisanship of early 19th-century journalism, and the ideal of objectivity in the 20th-century press, should be viewed as temporal products rather than everlasting truths. In the last regard, history's aim is to create understanding, and such understanding can only really be sought via an immersion in the full world of the past.

NOTES

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, (New York: Vintage House, 1945), p. 195.

2. For example, see Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 167.

3. For example, see William E. Ames, *A History of the National Intelligencer*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972).

4. Charles S. Sydnor, *American Revolutionaries in the Making: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia* (New York: The Free Press, 1965); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); William N. Chambers and Walter D. Burnham, editors, *The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Richard Hofstadter, *The*

Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

5. In general, see Roy Nichols, *The Invention of the American Political Parties* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967), and Noble E. Cunningham Jr., *The Making of the American Party System, 1789-1809* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1965).

6. Nichols, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

7. Nichols, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-278.

8. Clyde N. Wilson, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1978) volumes 8-11; Robert V. Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

9. William N. Chambers and Philip C. Davis, "Party, Competition and Mass Participation: The Case of the Democratizing Party System, 1824-52," *The History of American Electoral Behavior*, Joel Silbey, Allan G. Bogue and William H. Flanigan, editors (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

10. Richard P. McCormick, "Political Development and the Second Party System," in William N. Chambers and Walter D. Burnham, eds., *The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 104-106, 110.

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